



A CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 464 receives fuel from a C-130 Hercules during a Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel training mission here March 8. (Middle photo) Soldiers with 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, "The Old Guard," Bravo Company, wait to board a CH-53E Super Stallion before participating in a night Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel training mission here March 8.

This TRAP's for you

Story and Photos by Cpl. Adam C. Schnell

NEAR CAMP LEMONIER, Djibouti – As the sun sets over Djibouti, Africa, two CH-53E Super Stallions from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 464 carrying soldiers from 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, "The Old Guard," Bravo Company participate in joint personnel recovery training here Mar. 8.

The two units, both supporting Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, came together to perform a simulated personnel recovery mission to better prepare the troops for real-life situations while using night vision equipment.

Personnel recovery, also known as Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel, is a fast-paced insertion and exertion of troops to retrieve assets in hostile situations. The goal of the simulated night TRAP mission is to improve the troops' proficiency while using night vision equipment and learn to use aerial support.

To improve the realism of the training, in-flight refueling of the helicopters was incorporated into the training. Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron-234 provided the refueling support.

"Refueling in the air increases the range we can travel," said Marine Maj. David R. Braman, operations officer and pilot for HMH-464. "It also makes the mission more realistic for the troops who one day may have to be in the helo for a while."

The Beaufort, S.C., native said that the longer a person is in the helicopter, the more fatigued they become. The troops must be prepared for anything that could happen during a real-life mission.

The TRAP procedures, mainly used by the Marine Corps, were taught to the soldiers by members of the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit almost two months ago.

"We learned everything from the standard operating procedures to actually simulating the recovery of a downed pilot," said Army 2nd Lt. Jesse Ceja, a platoon leader for Bravo Company.

Ceja, a Houston native, said because his platoon was the first to learn the procedures, they taught the rest of the company. The company, consisting of three platoons, is prepared to take on any TRAP mission.

"We've gotten a lot of help from the Marines in 464," said Ceja. "They have always been really professional."

Once the procedures were taught, the infantry platoons started applying those skills learned in the classroom to the field. Once landed the soldiers piled out the back of the CH-53E helicopter and set up security for the aircraft.

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A soldier with 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, "The Old Guard," Bravo Company, provides security using night vision equipment during a night Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel training mission here Mar. 8. The goal of the simulated night TRAP mission is to improve the troops' proficiency while using night vision equipment and learn to use aerial support.